

Common Core State Standards Steering Committee

Final Report to the Governor

**Adopted
12/23/2013**

Pursuant to Executive Order #2013-06, the Common Core State Standards Steering Committee is required to submit a report no later than December 31, 2013. This document represents the Steering Committee's recommendations for continued implementation of the Nevada Academic Content Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, and other matters related thereto.

STATE OF NEVADA



COMMON CORE STEERING COMMITTEE

December 24, 2013

The Honorable Brian Sandoval
Governor of Nevada
State Capitol
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sandoval:

On behalf of the Common Core State Standards Steering Committee formed by Executive Order #2013-06, we are pleased to submit this report of the Committee's activities. We believe the report fulfills all tasks set for this Committee; the recommendations have each been assigned to a lead agency which will be able to carry out your future directives if you concur.

The Steering Committee met a total of four times, including the meeting to approve this report. We received information from the Nevada Department of Education, the Nevada System of Higher Education, the Regional Professional Development Programs, employee associations, and the Nevada Parent Teacher Association. During the course of our meeting it quickly became apparent that the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, now adopted in our state as the Nevada Academic Content Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, has proceeded with reasonable success. By the School Year 2014-15, these standards will be fully operational in all public schools and the aligned assessments that go hand-in-hand with the new standards will be in use throughout the state.

Between now and that time, however, the Steering Committee firmly believes that full implementation will be aided by:

- Additional professional development activities for classroom teachers and building administrators;
- Additional attention to technology, textbook selection, and instructional material development and/or selection;
- Special attention to the transition of high school seniors as they move to college and careers; and
- A comprehensive public communications plan, as called for in your Executive Order.

The Steering Committee's examination of implementation progress touched on a number of other issues, some of which find their way into this report at Related Recommendations. We also provide a series of Appendices that include budgets and factual information.

Finally, an ongoing partnership between the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is called for by our examination of the Standards implementation. NDE and NSHE share responsibility for everything from teacher preparation to high school senior transition to educator professional development. For Nevada's students in K-12 and higher education and Nevada's business community, the increased rigor of the Nevada Academic Content Standards will have immeasurable benefits as we move into the future and work to expand and strengthen Nevada's workforce. We pledge our continued support of your Administration's efforts to fully, efficiently, and effectively implement the Nevada Academic Content Standards and to strive for the desired increases in student achievement which drove the adoption of such standards from the outset.

We look forward to hearing from your Office on how the recommendation of this Report can be implemented. Thank you for this opportunity to spearhead this effort.

Respectfully yours,

Common Core Steering Committee Co-Chairs



DALE A.R. ERQUIAGA
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Nevada Department of Education



DANIEL J. KLAICH
Chancellor
Nevada System of Higher Education

Steering Committee Members

Dr. Steve Canavero
Senator Aaron Ford
Amy Henderson
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Jim Pfrommer
Dr. Chelli Smith
Dr. William Speer
Adam Whatley
Superintendent Jeff Zander

REPORT OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS STEERING COMMITTEE
Pursuant to Executive Order #2013-06
December 2013

Presented on the following pages are recommendations dealing with Professional Development, Instructional Materials and Technology, High School Transition, Communications, and Related Matters. Additional material is contained in the Appendices.

Professional Development

Findings: Training of classroom teachers and instructional coaches in the understanding and application of the Nevada Academic Content Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics (based on the Common Core) has been decentralized and without a central coordinating voice. Training continues to be provided by local districts, employee associations, the Regional Professional Development Programs, the Nevada System of Higher Education, and individual vendors or private sources. Although the Department of Education played an early role in coordinating these services, it has not taken full responsibility for explication and enforcement of the standards as adopted by the Council on Academic Standards and the State Board of Education.

Recommendation #1: The Superintendent of Public Instruction should convene a meeting of professional development providers as soon as practical in January 2014. As a result of this conversation, the Superintendent and the Statewide Council for the Coordination of Regional Training Programs should prepare a coordinated plan of action for all training related to the new Standards, including but not limited to a calendar, contact information, and web resources; specific assignments and a division of labor are desired outcomes. In addition to focusing on teachers in the core subjects of English Language Arts and Mathematics, the plan should address training for administrators, as well as teachers responsible for literacy in social studies, science and technical subjects. The plan should take into account the needs of English language learners and Special Education students.

Recommendation #2: Following the January 2014 meeting referenced above, the Superintendent and Statewide Coordinating Council should ensure that training modules are created that reflect the instructional shifts in English Language Arts (ELA) and in Mathematical practices. Modules should also be considered for the expected adoption of new Science Standards and in the area of Early Learning related to ELA, Math and Science. A development budget of up to \$200,000 is included in the Appendix of this Report.

Recommendation #3: The Nevada Department of Education website should be enhanced to include examples of what good instruction looks like within each standard, including examples of good material that can be used to implement the Nevada Academic Content Standards.

Recommendation #4: Regular (perhaps monthly) newsletters should be disseminated from the Nevada Department of Education, and a communication protocol developed that makes the information accessible to all stakeholders.

Recommendation #5: School districts should use at least one of the four professional development days specifically to address the Nevada Academic Content Standards and all staff must participate. The Superintendent should issue non-regulatory guidance to each district encouraging such use, and may also wish to consider using his authority to require corrective action plans to enforce such training if districts are found not to be working in concert with their employee associations on this important issue.

Recommendation #6: The Superintendent, through the Department's Office of Licensure, should prepare recommended regulations for consideration by the Commission on Professional Standards and/or changes to Department review policy to ensure that:

- New hires are able to demonstrate knowledge of standards within submitted transcripts; and
- License renewal includes one or two credits that directly relate to all the Nevada Academic Content Standards, as those standards relate to a licensee's field of preparation.

Recommendation #7: The Department of Education should re-assess the level of resources historically and currently committed to Standards and Curriculum in Nevada, with an eye toward either increased staffing or maximizing use of existing personnel in new ways that are more appropriate to the era of higher more rigorous standards and aligned assessments.

Instructional Materials and Technology

Findings: School districts and individual teachers have difficulty determining which of the many materials available through vendors and online are truly aligned to the Common Core and will improve instruction. In addition, it is clear that the new Standards rely more on technology in the classroom than Nevadans are accustomed to, yet State resources for technology (and, for that matter, textbooks) have lagged during the Great Recession.

Recommendation #1: The Nevada Department of Education must take the lead in building a digital library of instructional support materials. As districts resume purchasing textbooks or digital resources, the Department must ensure that materials are aligned to the Common Core in fact and not just in name. The Superintendent should explore grant opportunities during the legislative interim to fund a team of contractors to build a digital library or collaborate with national organizations already developing such resources. The next biennial budget should include funding for this type of expense at the Department level on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation #2: As the Department of Education examines "One to One" digital device initiatives over the coming year, special attention must be paid to budgetary impacts that can be brought to the Governor and Legislature. In addition, a realistic overview of broadband capability, including a gap analysis, for online testing must be presented to stakeholders before the beginning of School Year 2014-15.

Recommendation #3: Relevancy of the Standards to classroom instruction can be reinforced and accelerated by the presence of business representatives. School districts should make an effort to reinforce classroom instruction with business visits and information about "real world" applications of the Standards, literacy, and critical thinking skills. Discussion of career readiness must take an equal footing with college preparation, especially in high school classrooms. If districts lag in this engagement, a statewide effort for business advice on classroom relevance

should be initiated by the Governor's Office or an entity assigned this task, perhaps the P20W Advisory Council.

Recommendation #4: The English Mastery Council and the Special Education Advisory Committee, both of which have relationships with the Department of Education, must examine the new Standards and related assessments and make clear, actionable recommendations about necessary accommodations before the beginning of the 2014-15 School Year.

High School Transition

Findings: A working group surveyed the existing transition course options and partnerships between higher education and local school districts that focus on the senior year of high school. Specifically, the purpose of the survey sent separately to NSHE institutions and local school districts was to gather information on current options, including but not limited to college and career ready curriculum and interventions in the senior year of high school designed to address student deficiencies in English language arts or mathematics that are identified through the 11th grade college and career readiness assessment. The survey responses from NSHE institutions and most school districts identified not only these partnerships and course options, but also other existing efforts to provide high school students with academic support necessary to succeed on their path to college and career. A copy of the higher education and school district survey responses are included as appendices to this report.

Recommendation #1: Programs, courses and partnerships currently exist that may be used to address deficiencies in the senior year when students do not meet benchmarks under the 11th grade college and career readiness assessment. Many of the programs provide a strong foundation from which these efforts can be modeled and expanded within and to other school districts to benefit students throughout the State. However, these options do not exist in all districts or in sufficient quantity to provide such opportunities to all students when the 11th grade assessment is administered statewide in 2014-15, as required by A.B. 288. Additional resources should be directed towards transition courses for students in the senior year, especially in the rural school districts. If districts are unable to budget for this in the current biennium, categorical funding should be requested by the Department of Education in 2015.

Recommendation #2: The Department should survey districts prior to administration of the (expected) Spring 2015 new college and career readiness assessment to determine plans and approaches. The college and career readiness assessments may be an area in which resources will need to be provided for the districts and students as the state moves into the new 11th grade testing regimen.

Recommendation #3: Further, in noting that additional resources should be directed to senior year transition courses, the Committee discussed the need to determine whether additional resources may also be needed by districts as they shift from the High School Proficiency Examination to end-of-course assessments, as required under A.B. 288.

Communications

Findings: Nevada is not unlike the rest of the nation, which is revealed by numerous surveys to have limited understanding of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Committee heard some testimony that school district personnel may be reasonably aware of the new

Standards, but not of the breadth of their implications, while parents and the business community are generally unaware of the effort to increase rigor. An apparently small but very vocal group of Nevadans is significantly more organized in opposing the Common Core than the Department or any school district has been to date.

Recommendation #1: The Superintendent and Chancellor should form a Communications Work Group to develop, coordinate, and direct an ongoing “brand” campaign about the benefit of the new Standards for college and career readiness. This campaign should make use of an umbrella theme or tagline of “Nevada Ready!” to focus on the benefits of college and career readiness initiatives in Nevada public education. An initial communications plan is included in the Appendices of this Report.

Recommendation #2: Any communication effort must begin with school district personnel, primarily classroom teachers, and work its way somewhat organically to other stakeholders. Close coordination with the employee associations and their existing “cadre” approach to communications on the new Standards must begin in January 2014.

Recommendation #3: A professional communications firm should be retained, using funding raised from private and philanthropic sources, to leverage the communications efforts of the Nevada Department of Education and Nevada System of Higher Education.

Recommendation #4: The Nevada Department of Education and Nevada System of Higher Education should conduct surveys of the best practices demonstrated by districts and schools in implementing the new standards; survey information should be used for a program to recognize excellence and leverage opportunities to enhance these practices throughout the field.

Recommendation #5: The Governor’s Office, Superintendent, and Chancellor should cooperate to ensure the timely and broad dissemination of this report to the school districts, affiliated organizations, and stakeholder groups mentioned herein.

Related Recommendations

Findings: In addition to Academic Content Standards, the Department of Education maintains a significant program in Career and Technical Education (CTE) that is also standards-based with aligned end-of-program assessments. As part of the CTE program of study, teachers must follow the approved state technical standards for the program and the approved state employability standards, called the Employability Skills for Career Readiness. The State Certificate of Skill Attainment is issued to students who: (1) complete a course sequence with a grade-point average of 3.0 or higher; (2) pass the end-of-program technical assessment; and (3) pass the employability skills assessment. As part of the new structure for CTE, school districts are working to organize coursework to promote higher program completion rates. Over the past two years, the Office of Career and Technical Education has revised nearly all of its standards for course work required to complete a program as well as development of a series of end-of-program assessments. In revising the standards and creating the assessments, the Office of Career and Technical Education has worked hand in hand with business leaders statewide and nationally to ensure students are prepared for a career in their chosen field.

Also helping to ensure students are ready for the transition from high school to career is the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program, which was given additional funding in the last legislative session. Several districts are benefitting from this program. According to the national website, JAG is a "state-based national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who are most at-risk. In more than three decades of operation, JAG has delivered consistent, compelling results – helping nearly three-quarters of a million young people stay in school through graduation, pursue postsecondary education and secure quality entry-level jobs leading to career advancement opportunities."

Recommendation #1: The Department of Education should maximize the experience with CTE to fully message a College and Career Readiness focus for standards-based instruction and aligned assessments in Nevada. This platform will help students and stakeholders understand and fully embrace the more rigorous, 21st Century approach.

Recommendation #2: The Department must provide data on the success of programs like JAG and CTE education in order to support any future requests for resources. Targeted categorical requests like these offer an opportunity to increase education spending but require a "return on investment" mentality.

APPENDICES

- A. Budget Proposal for Training Modules
- B. Nevada School Districts Survey
- C. NSHE Institutional Survey
- D. Communications Action Plan